

1891
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LETTERS
TO
WILLIAM GODWIN.

VOL. II.

a

LETTERS
FROM
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
TO
WILLIAM GODWIN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

1891.

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(Not for Sale.)

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VOL. II.

B

LETTERS TO
WILLIAM GODWIN.



LETTER XVIII.

BISHOPGATE,
January 25th, 1816.
[*Wednesday.*]

SIR,

Longdill told me a week ago that he was then going into the country for ten days. Relying on your information, however, I have written to him, requesting that he will immediately see Whitton, inform him of my dissatisfaction on the subject of his delay, and extract some satisfactory answer. This he was to have done ten days ago. At least until the result of this measure is known to me, I am unwilling

to excite suspicions in Longdill that I am in treaty for borrowing money on annuity. The mode of address which you suggest would undoubtedly appear unnatural to me. I might destroy L.'s confidence in the regularity and prudence of my conduct at a time when perhaps the whole success of the affair with my father depends on its preservation.

Hayward in November was profuse in his professions both of willingness and ability to procure me money on annuity. If I wanted £1,000 he said that he could readily procure the sum. He knew at that period the uncertainty of the negotiations with my father. Perhaps he may believe that the chances are now multiplied against the probability of its accomplishment. At least, it appears to me, that the additional security which he would feel from your assertions that the interest was safe, may be considered

sufficient to overbalance these contingencies. I feel unwilling, until you shall have urged him on this point, and extorted from him a declaration whether in the last resort he would refuse to serve you by negotiating the loan, to accede to the doubtful and difficult measure of obtaining the letters to which I have alluded, from Longdill. Add to which, it is very doubtful if they would, when procured, be serviceable or satisfactory.

A Mr. Bryan[t], a Sussex Man, has written to me to know whether I would sell the reversion of a small estate in that county, on terms of 5 per cent. I have replied, that I cannot do so, being under engagement to sell the whole estate to my father ; but, if this engagement should be annulled, I should be glad to listen to his proposal.

He writes in answer, that "he could find me purchasers at a fair price for several things." He says he dines

every day, during term, at Anderton's coffee house, Fleet Street. If you entertain any doubt of Hayward, perhaps you had better see this Bryant, or I will do so, or write to him as appears good to you. But I am certainly anxious that you should urge Hayward to a decisive and immediate reply. I will spare no pains, or any danger which it is not evident ruin to incur, but that you shall have the money in March. If Hayward fails, do not fear an ultimate failure. I am persuaded that my situation is now widely different, and far more commanding and respectable than when I with difficulty procured money to live.

You seem strangely to have misunderstood the affair in April. Certainly I did fix on £1,200 as your contingent from the sum then raised, on purpose to apply £200 to my own demands; which I should have been unable so to apply without your

co-operation, unless indeed instead of £1,000 I had given you only £800, which your refusal to have co-operated in this manner would have compelled me, in self defence, however reluctantly, to do. I thought you understood and acquiesced in this arrangement. There is nothing remarkable in this foolish mistake but the unskilfulness or unfaithfulness of our interpreters, and it is well that such imperfect intercourse did not, as in many instances it might, have produced more serious errors.

I should come to town willingly on the business of this loan, when it appears that my presence is required. If Hayward eventually refuses to negotiate it for us, then I certainly think some personal discussion is needed. I could perhaps then make clear to you the reasonableness of my reluctance to apply to Longdill. But I shall leave this subject henceforth

entirely to your own feelings. Probably my feelings on such an occasion would not be less distressing than your own. So far as those feelings are concerned, I should certainly reluctantly entertain the idea of such an interview. But I would not sacrifice anything essential to the raising of this money to exempt myself from the sensations, however painful, which could not fail to arise on meeting a man, who having been once my friend, would receive me with cold looks and haughty words.

Frances and Mrs. Godwin will probably be glad to hear that Mary has safely recovered from a very favourable confinement, and that her child is well.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Addressed outside.]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41 Skinner Street,

Snow Hill,

London.

LETTER XIX.

BISHOPGATE,
January 28th, 1816.
[*Saturday.*]

SIR,

A letter which I received from Longdill by yesterday's post, decides, I fear, the question of applying to him for the letters of Whitton. I will briefly recapitulate the contents. It says that in compliance with my requests he has applied to Whitton. He tells me that W. has by no means been idle in the affair. My father wishes to bring the matter to bear, but he judges it necessary previously to ask the Lord Chancellor's advice. This Longdill also considers essential even to my interest. The bill to be given in is now before

counsel. Longdill's expression is, that it will cause considerable delay. It is evident now that my father's intentions are sincere. What time the Chancery affair will take we cannot know.

This much however is certain, that my Father desires to settle the thing, however awkward and long are the measures he takes for that settlement.

The arrangement in the spring could not be completed without a Chancery suit, though it is certain that there is not the smallest ground for a similar proceeding in the present instance. In all probability it is of a much simpler nature. I cannot obviously now procure Whitton's former letters. But surely Hayward can substantiate if he would take the trouble to inquire in an underhand and professional manner the facts which I now relate. These facts I imagine are sufficient to satisfy him if he only requires such satisfaction as he was contented with last autumn.

I forgot to answer one question. Nash's suit is nominally instituted by me, but really by my father, and for his interests and at his expense.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Since I wrote the former page, I have discovered Longdill's letter, which I thought I had mislaid. I enclose it for you to read and if you please to use.

Of course if you show it to Longdill you will use due caution about the last paragraph of it.

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,
41, Skinner Street,
Snow Hill,
London.

LETTER XX.

6, GARDEN COURT,
TEMPLE, [LONDON].

February 16th, 1816.

[Friday.]

SIR,

In the course of a few weeks I shall certainly leave the neighbourhood of London, and possibly even execute my design of settling in Italy. I have felt it necessary to decide on some such measure in consequence of an event which, I fear, will make even a more calamitous change in your prospects.

It is the opinion of the lawyers that my father ought not to complete the intended affair with me and that he cannot arrange any other. If you do not feel it necessary to explain with me in person on this subject I can state the

details in a letter. Such however is the bare fact. The impossibility of effecting anything by *post obit*, or sale of reversion, has been already adverted to by me. I am far from retracting any engagement made for your benefit, but I cannot refrain from suspecting under these new circumstances how far I am justified even by my sincere zeal for your interests in signing the deed which, Hayward informs me, is in progress. You will believe that I am the more disinterested in what I say when I inform you that my own difficulties suspended by the intended settlement now come upon me with tenfold weight; so that I have every prospect of wanting money for my domestic expenditure.

I intended to have left town at 2 o'clock to-morrow. I will not do so, if you wish to see me. In that latter case send a letter *by a porter*, to Mr. Hogg's, of Garden Court, Temple, making your own appointment.

Yet I do not know that it is best for you to see me. On me it would inflict deep dejection. But I would not refuse anything which I can do, so that I may benefit a man whom, in spite of his wrongs to me, I respect and love.

Besides I shall certainly not delay to depart from the haunts of men. Your interests may suffer from your own fastidiousness, they shall not be injured by my wayward hopes and disappointments.

I shall write to you by Sunday's post, if I receive no answer to this letter.

Jane of course is with you. She is uninformed as to the latest and most decisive particulars relating to the overthrow of my hopes.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Friday night.

[*Addressed outside.*]

William Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill.

LETTER XXI.

LONDON.

*February 17th, 1816.**

[Saturday.]

SIR,

I HASTEN to relieve your anxiety. I have seen Hayward and arranged with him to sign the deed at 12 o'clock next Monday week. In what I have said to him, as you will discover, I have taken every imaginable precaution that you should not be disappointed.

P. B. S[HELLEY].

Addressed outside.]

William Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill.

* This letter is endorsed (at the head) by Jane Clairmont, as follows :—

“The date of this letter is written in Godwin’s handwriting,—most probably to remember by the date when the deed would be signed.—Cl. Clairmont.”

LETTER XXII.

BISHOPGATE.

February 18th, 1816.

Sunday.

SIR,

You will have received my letter in answer to yours sent to Garden Court in the course of Saturday evening. This will entirely satisfy you as to my intentions about the deed.—I promised you further details by this post on the subject of the affair with my father. It is the opinion of the most eminent lawyers that my father cannot become a party to the projected arrangements without forfeiting the property devised by my grandfather's will. In consequence of this opinion, and for the purpose of ascertaining some other

point not necessarily connected with my immediate interest, they recommend a suit in Chancery. They are desirous that their own opinion, however well founded, should be confronted with the Lord Chancellor's. It is moreover the duty of one of the Council, Mr. Butler, as trustee, to be extremely cautious in his conduct. Longdill entertains no doubt that the issue of this appeal will be unfavourable to my views. He considers indeed the question as already decided, and the proceedings in Chancery, so far at least as they regard that part of the affair, entirely superfluous.

I understand that the existence of two or three words in the will occasions this most unexpected change. The words are these—"For the time being"—the application of those words to the present case is explained to be, that in case my father should survive myself and my infant son, my younger

brother, at the expiration of his minority, might require my father to fulfill those conditions of the will which he would incapacitate himself from fulfilling by cutting off the entail. It is altogether a most complex affair, the words of the will being equivocal to a singular degree. A new difficulty arises also from the import of my signature to the Deed of Disclaimer, as it is called, given in the presumption of the completion of this settlement. One thing alone is certain, that until my father's death I shall receive no portion of the estate.

How does this information affect your prospects? Does anything remain to be done by me? You have entire knowledge of my resources, my situation, and my disposition towards you; what do you think I can do, or I ought to do, to set you free?

I informed you that I should be in town on Monday week, at 12 o'clock,

to sign the deed at Hayward's. My letter of Friday night asserts that I should not be in town again before I left the neighbourhood; but I did not foresee that the deed would not be ready at Hayward's, or that there would be so much difficulty and expense in conveying it to Bishopgate.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To

*Mr. William Godwin,
London.*

LETTER XXIII.

BISHOPGATE,
February 21st, 1816.
[*Wednesday.*]

SIR,

I saw Turner yesterday who engaged to convey to you by that night's post a reassurance on the points which he called on me to ascertain. I should have written to you myself if I had not returned too late from a long walk with Turner in which I endeavoured to make him understand as clearly as possible the present state of my affairs, and my dispositions towards you. I shall certainly not leave this country, or even remove to a greater distance from the neighbourhood of London, until the unfavourable aspect assumed by my

affairs shall appear to be unalterable ; or until all has been done by me which it is possible for me to do for the relief of yours. This was my intention from the moment that I first received an intimation of the change.

I wrote to you for the purpose of giving you an opportunity of making my assistance as available to you as possible before I departed.

When I wrote to you from London I certainly was more firmly persuaded than now of the inefficacy of any further attempt for the settlement of my affairs.

You have suggested a view of the question that makes me pause.

At all events I shall remain here or in the neighbourhood for the present and hold myself in readiness to do my utmost towards advancing you the money. You are perhaps aware that one of the chief motives which strongly urges me either to desert my native country, dear to me from many con-

siderations, or resort to its most distant and solitary regions, is the perpetual experience of neglect or enmity from almost every one but those who are supported by my resources. I shall cling perhaps during the infancy of my children to all the prepossessions attached to the country of my birth, hiding myself and Mary from that contempt which we so unjustly endure.

I think therefore at present only of settling in Cumberland or Scotland. In the event, the evils that will flow to my children from our desolate and solitary situation here, point out an exile as the only resource to them against that injustice which we can easily despise. You will observe that the mere circumstance of our departing to the North of England, and not immediately putting into effect our Italian scheme, it is strictly within the limits of the most formal intercourse that you should know. I might have misunderstood

Turner, for I did not urge him to explain or literally repeat expressions: but it appeared to me from his conversation that you had communicated with him on the subject of our antient intimacy, and of the occasion of its close, in a manner that expressed a certain degree of interest in my future prospects. I determined on that account to present to you a real picture of my feelings in as much as they would influence my plan of residence. If this exposure should be indifferent to you, *silence* will afford an obvious protection against additional mistake.

P. B. SHELLEY.

I expect anxiously the plan to which you alluded as to an infallible expedient for my father to adopt that he might settle with me.

I confess my hopes on that subject are very faint.

Hayward wrote to-day to say that

he had everything ready for Monday,
twelve o'clock. I shall be punctual.

Addressed outside.]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill,

London.

LETTER XXIV.

BISHOPGATE.

February 26th, 1816.

Monday night.

I WISH to God Turner's delusion had assumed any other shape, or that the painful task of destroying its flattering effects was reserved for some one less interested in your concerns than myself. He has entirely misapprehended the whole case, but I will endeavour to state it clearly.

I possessed in January 1815 a reversion expectant, on the death of the survivor of my grandfather and father, approaching so nearly to the nature of an absolute reversion, that by a few ceremonies I could, on these contin-

gencies falling, possess myself of the fee-simple and alienate the whole.

My grandfather had exerted the utmost power with which the law invested him to prevent this ultimate alienation, but his power terminated in my person and was exercised only to the restraint of my father. The estate of which I now speak is that which is the subject of the settlement of 1792.

My grandfather's will was dictated by the same spirit which had produced the settlement. He desired to perpetuate a large mass of property, he therefore left the moiety of about £240,000 to be disposed of in the following manner. My father was to enjoy the interest of it *during his life*. After my father's death I was to enjoy the interest alone, in like manner, conditionally, on my having previously deprived myself of the absolute power, which I now possess, over the settled estates of 1792 ; and so accept the reversion of a life annuity of

12,000 or 14,000 per annum in exchange for a reversion of landed property of 6, 7, or 8,000 a year. All was reversion. I was entitled, in no view of the case, to any immediate advantage.

My grandfather's will limited my option of accepting these conditions, to one year from the date of his death. But I did not hesitate a moment to refuse them, nor, untill Longdill informed me that it was my father's desire and interest, that I should act as I intended to act, did I see any necessity of making a secret of my resolution. I allowed Longdill however to manage these affairs in his own way, and he agreed with Whitton that I should refuse to accept my grandfather's legacy, and that my father should purchase of me my interest in the settled estates at a fair price. The project of this arrangement was very satisfactory to me, as I saw myself about to realise the very scheme best suited to the uncertainty

of my health, and the peculiarity of my views and situation, by the sacrifice of that which I never intended to accept.

I signed the deed of disclaimer for the purpose of making my father certain of my intentions, so that our operations need not wait for the expiration of the year appointed by my grandfather's will. If, as Turner says, I have the power to stand in the same situation with respect to my grandfather's will now as on the day of his death, that power is entirely worthless, and must as you see be placed out of any consideration.

Now lawyers say that my father dares not buy my interest in the settled estates of 1792 because such an act might induce a forfeiture of the additional income he derives from concurring with the intentions of the will.

After this clear recapitulation of facts, with which I had imagined you to be fully acquainted, I entreat you not to

adopt Turner's delusive inference that because " I am ready and desirous to fulfill my engagements, your difficulties are therefore at an end."

Your letter of this morning indeed throws a new light on Turner's intervention, at least as I regard it.

The mistake, the vital mistake, he has made appears to me by no means consistent with the legal acuteness you describe him to possess. I cannot help thinking that you transfer your first appreciation of his taste and his wit to a subject on which the very subtlety essential to these qualifications leads him astray. Or perhaps you are right in this judgement, and he is not enough interested for you, not enough your friend to force his attention to the point. If he would think or act for your or my interest as for his own, then possibly he might deserve your opinion.

If after this explanation you continue to think that his suggestions would be

valuable I will contrive to see him without delay.

But without rejecting whatever Turner's kindness or experience could afford, are there no other means of arriving at the same end? You do not understand the state of my affairs so exactly as a lawyer could explain it to you. You believe that I, from ignorance of law and the usages of the world, let pass opportunities of settling with my father. Cannot you explain the exact situation in which you stand with me to Sir James Mackintosh? He, I am informed, really desires to serve you, but is unable. If he knew how much of your future comfort depends on your having a true conception of the state of my affairs, surely he would with pleasure enter into such explanations with me as would make him master of the subject. His various life makes his experience far more valuable than that of Turner, even if you should

judge that this latter surpassed him in intrinsic mental worth.

I will not add to the length of this letter by explaining a circumstance of no real moment, but which asks a good many words. I shall so soon see either Turner or some other interlocutor on your part.

I trust to your kindness that you will forbear showing this letter to Turner. I have spoken my real doubts of his efficiency which, should an occasion require, I would not think to repeat in his presence. But he is apt to take offence, and I am too generally hated not to feel that the smallest kindness from an old acquaintance is valuable.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Feb. 27th.

I open this letter to mention that for some days I shall be quite incapable of active exertion. I was seized last night with symptoms of irritable fever,

and my state requires rest to prevent
serious effects.

Addressed outside.]

William Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill,

London.

LETTER XXV.

13, NORFOLK STREET,
[LONDON.]

March 6th, 1816.

[Wednesday.]

SIR,

The first part of your letter alludes to a subject in which my feelings are most deeply interested, and on which I could wish to receive an entire explanation. I confess that I do not understand how the pecuniary engagements subsisting between us in any degree impose restrictions on your conduct towards me. They did not, at least to your knowledge or with your consent, exist at the period of my return from France, and yet your conduct towards me and your daughter was then

precisely such as it is at present. Perhaps I ought to except the tone which you assumed in conversation with Turner respecting me, which for anything that I learn from you I know not how favourably he may not have perverted. In my judgement neither I nor your daughter nor her offspring ought to receive the treatment which we encounter on every side. It has perpetually appeared to me to have been your especial duty to see that so far as mankind value your good opinion, we were dealt justly by, and that a young family innocent and benevolent and united should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers. My astonishment, and I will confess, when I have been treated with most harshness and cruelty by you, my indignation, has been extreme, that knowing as you do my nature, any considerations should have prevailed on you to have been thus harsh and cruel. I lamented also over my ruined

hopes of all that your genius once taught me to expect from your virtue, when I found that for yourself your family and your creditors you would submit to that communication with me, which you once rejected and abhorred, and which no pity for my poverty or sufferings, assumed willingly for you, could avail to extort. Do not talk of *forgiveness* again to me, for my blood boils in my veins and my gall rises against all that bears the human form, when I think of what I their benefactor and ardent lover have endured of enmity and contempt from you and from all mankind.

I cannot mix the feelings to which you have given birth with details in answer to your view of my affairs. I can only say that I think you are too sanguine, but that I will do all that I can, not to disappoint you. I see much difficulty and some danger, but I am in no temper to overrate my own incon-

veniences. I shall certainly remain in London for some days, perhaps longer, as affairs appear to require. Meanwhile oblige me by referring to the letter in which I mention Bryant and enclose me his direction as soon as possible. I have left his letter at Bishopgate. I will take an early opportunity of replying to your letter at length, if no other mode of explanation suggests itself.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill.

LETTER XXVI.

13, NORFOLK STREET,

[LONDON.]

March 7th, 1816.

[*Thursday.*]

SIR,

The hopes which I had conceived of receiving from you the treatment and consideration which I esteem to be justly due to me, were destroyed by your letter dated the 5th. The feelings occasioned by this discovery were so bitter and so excruciating that I am resolved for the future to stifle all those expectations which my sanguine temper too readily erects on the slightest relaxation of the contempt and the neglect in the midst of which I live. I must appear the reverse of what I

really am, haughty and hard, if I am not to see myself and all that I love trampled upon and outraged. Pardon me, I do entreat you, if pursued by the conviction, that where my true character is most entirely known, I there meet with the most systematic injustice ; I have expressed myself with violence, overlook a fault caused by your own equivocal politeness, and I will offend no more.

We will confine our communication to business.

I have left a note at Anderton's coffee house appointing an interview with Bryant. If I have a fair offer on the subject of reversion, there is at once an end to the objections which I should be inclined to make to any other arrangement from the supposition of my father's settling in some manner on the basis of the original proposal.

If Bryant is in earnest, I will make Longdill treat with him. Longdill will

not consent to treat with him unless his terms approach to reasonableness. I do not scruple to promise you the advance if it can be managed thus.

I have a vital objection to auction, or any enquiries among professed money-lenders. I should suffer more in my negotiation with my father from such measures, which would probably be unsuccessful, than from a fair bargain which might be carried into effect.

The affair with Nash has a tendency the opposite to that which you attribute to it.

It is now in Chancery, though from what fund it is to be paid no one knows, and will infallibly be decided in my favour. It will be decided that he is to receive his capital and 5 per cent., and no more. This proves that the bond is good property, but that all speculations by which more than 5 per cent. is to be made (as no one will

advance money without larger profit) will be annulled by the Chancellor.

I entirely agree with you on the subject of raising money on annuity.

I plainly see how necessary immediate advances are to your concerns, and will take care that I shall fail in nothing which I can do to procure them.

I shall remain in town at least another week, that I may give every possible attention to this subject. My own concerns are decided, I fear, already.

P. B. SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill.

LETTER XXVII.

LONDON.

March 9th, 1816.

[Saturday].

SIR,

I have made an appointment with Bryant which he has not kept, probably because he has not called at the coffee house yet. I do not regret this neglect as I think, under the circumstances I am about to mention, that a negotiation with him would be safest postponed.

Since Wednesday I have been daily expecting a message from Longdill to require my signature for the answer in Chancery. Not having heard from him I called this morning—the answer was ready. In the progress of conversation I asked Longdill how soon he thought

the question would be decided. He replied coldly that he supposed in a month or two, that he scarcely knew the mode which Whitton designed to adopt, but that it ought to be very indifferent to me, since it would certainly be decided that we must not touch the estates. It happened at this period of the conversation that Whitton came in. His manner and tone on the subject were the very reverse of Longdill's. He blamed Longdill for having neglected to send for me to sign the answer yesterday, which delay he observed would prevent our cause from being heard on Wednesday, the day which he had provided. He seemed to regret that *one day* had been lost, he said that the production of the infant had already procrastinated the proceedings much to the displeasure of Sir Timothy. He expressed on my father's account the greatest anxiety for the approaching decision, and that in a manner that

makes me hope that it is possible that Mr. Hart and Butler and Sir T. Romilly should be in the wrong. Whitton expresses much confidence in the expectation that this decision will enable me and my father to divide the whole estates.—It is advisable under these circumstances to suspend all other negotiations. The cause must be heard some day next week.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street.

Snow Hill.

LETTER XXVIII.

13, NORFOLK STREET,
LONDON.

March 16th, 1816.

[Saturday.]

SIR,

Turner has been with you, and he will have informed you that I have been active in the endeavour to raise money. I have seen Dawe, and attempted by every possible inducement to urge him to make the advance. He has not refused and even has promised that if he can procure any money he would willing[ly] lend it.

I have seen Bryant also, but nothing can be done with him until the question between my father and myself is dis-

posed of. This cause is to come on and to receive judgement next Tuesday.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.

41, Skinner Street.

LETTER XXIX.

13, NORFOLK STREET,
LONDON.

March 21st, 1816.

[Thursday.]

SIR,

I have not been unemployed in attempting to raise money, though I fear ineffectually. I have seen Bryant twice, and I fear that nothing favourable will result from my negotiation with him ; he has promised however to write if he should be able to do anything. My principal hope is Dawe, from whom I think money might be obtained if Turner would undertake to persuade him. Can you suggest any other means than those in which I have engaged ?

The decision in Chancery is postponed until to morrow (Thursday). I shall inform you of the event immediately.

P. B. SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41 Skinner St.,

Snow Hill.

LETTER XXX.

[26,] MARCHMONT STREET,
LONDON.

March 29th, 1816.

[*Friday.*]

SIR,

I had a long and most painful conversation with Turner last night on the subject of your pecuniary distress.—I am not, as he I fear leaves you to infer, unwilling to do my utmost, nor does my disposition in the least depend on the question of your demonstrating personal kindness to myself and Mary.—I see that if anything is to be done, it must be done instantly. You know my habitual, my constitutional inability to deal with monied men. I have no friend who will supply my deficien-

cies :—none who interest themselves in my own much less in your concerns which I have, as much as one man can make those of another, made my own. Can you not yourself see these money-lenders? Hayward's partner was in Chancery yesterday when he heard my title to the reversion admitted to be excellent, and my powers over that which I pretend to, unimpeached.—Would H[ayward] advance money on *post obit* bond or deferred annuity? Can you not see him?

I shall be absent from Town to-day, to-morrow, and part of the following day. Fanny can communicate, should anything important occur, with Mary on this subject. Her sentiments in all respects coincide with mine, her interest is perhaps greater ; her judgement, from what she knows of our situation, of what ought or can be done, is probably more calm and firm.—

Chancery, as you have heard, has

given a doubtful and hesitating opinion.
Whatever is to be done for me will be
reluctantly done.

P. B. SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

*41, Skinner Street,
Snow Hill.*

LETTER XXXI.

DOVER.

May 3rd, 1816.

[Friday.]

SIR,

No doubt you are anxious to hear the state of my concerns. I wish that it were in my power to give you a more favourable view of them than such as I am compelled to present. The limited condition of my fortune is regretted by me, as I imagine you will know, because among other designs of a similar nature, I cannot at once put you in possession of all that would be sufficient for the comfort and independence which it is so unjust that you should not have already received from society.

Chancery has decided that my father may not touch the estates. It has decided also that all the timber, worth it is said, £60,000, must be cut and sold, and the money paid into court to abide *whatever equities* may hereafter arise. This you already know from Fanny.

All this reduces me very nearly to the situation I described to you in March so far as relates to your share in the question. I shall receive nothing from my father except in the way of charity. Post obit concerns are very doubtful, and annuity transactions are confined within an obvious and very narrow limit.

My father is to advance me a sum to meet, as I have alleged, engagements contracted during the dependence of the late negociation. This sum is extremely small, and it is swallowed up, almost, in such of my debts and the liquidation of such securities as I have been compelled to state in order to

obtain the money at all. A few hundred pounds will remain ; you shall have £300 from this source in the course of the summer. I am to give a post obit security for the sum, and the affair at present stands that the deeds are to be drawn in the course of six weeks or two months, and that I am to return for their signature and to receive the money. There can be no doubt that, if my application in other quarters should not be discovered by my father, the money will be in readiness for you by the time that Kingdom's discounts recur.

I am afraid nothing can be done with Bryant. He promised to lend me £500 on *my mere bond* ; of course he failed, and this failure presents no good augury of his future performances. Still the negociation is open and I cannot but think that the only or at least the best chance for success would be your interference. Perhaps you would

dislike to be mistaken for my personal friend, which it would be necessary you should appear provided you acquiesce in this suggestion. I am confident that it would be a most favourable circumstance. It is necessary, I must remark, that secrecy should at present be observed.

Hayward has also an affair in hand. He says he thinks he can get me £300 on *post obit*.

Neither Bryant nor Hayward know that I have left England, and as I must in all probability, nay certainty, return in a few weeks to sign the deeds if the people should agree, or at least to get the money from my father, I thought it might relax their exertions to know that I was abroad. I informed them that I was gone for a fortnight or three weeks into the country. I have not even disengaged my lodgings in Marchmont-street.

The motives which determined me

to leave England and which I stated to you in a former letter, have continued since that period to press on me with accumulated force.

Continually detained in a situation where what I esteem a prejudice does not permit me to live on equal terms with my fellow-beings, I resolved to commit myself by a decided step, Therefore I take Mary to Geneva, where I shall devise some plan of settlement, and only leave her to return to London and exclusively devote myself to business.

I leave England, I know not, perhaps for ever. I return, alone, to see no friend, to do no office of friendship, to engage in nothing that can soothe the sentiments of regret, almost like remorse, which, under such circumstances, every one feels who quits his native land. I respect you, I think well of you, better perhaps than of any other person whom England contains.

You were the philosopher who first awakened, and who still as a philosopher to a very great degree regulates, my understanding. It is unfortunate for me that the part of your character which is least excellent should have been met by convictions of what was right to do. But I have been too indignant; I have been unjust to you; forgive me; burn those letters which contain the records of my violence, and believe that however what you erroneously call fame and honour separate us, I shall always feel towards you as the most affectionate of friends.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Address—*Poste Restante, Geneva.*

I have written in great haste expecting every moment to hear that the Pacquet sails.

[*Addressed outside.*]

— *Godwin, Esq.,*
41, *Skinner Street,*
London.

LETTER XXXII.

EVIAN, SAVOIE.

June 23rd, 1816.

[Sunday.]

SIR,

Your letter reached me the moment before I got off on a little tour on the borders of this lake. I write this reply from the first hot town I arrive at.

You know that we are not on those intimate terms as to permit that I should have minutely explained to you the motives which determined my departure, or that if explained you would have judged them with the judgement of a friend. I can easily imagine that you were disgusted by it. But I have ever been most unwillingly the cause of

disquiet to you, meaning you all possible good.

I entirely approve of your seeing Bryant, and I think if no unappreciated circumstance renders the farm in question more valuable than he states, that the terms his client offers are unusually favourable. But I think, if you undertake the business, you ought to ascertain this. The property need not actually be valued, as the expense of valuation is proportionally immense, but a clearer conception of its value than the purchaser's assertion or even the rental affords might, I should conceive, be obtained by one so clear-sighted and experienced in these affairs as yourself. But perhaps I am unjust to you to suppose that you would not in all these respects consider my property as your own.

There is a copy of the settlement, as I imagine, at Jew King's, which he said he would sell for ten pounds.

Enclosed is a note which, as probably it is inconvenient to you to pay this sum, directs my bankers to give as much to Mr. Martin. I have put this name supposing that you would not like your own to be stated.

I dare say that you can get the settlement for five pounds, if, as I strongly believe, it is yet in King's possession. If it is not, I can think of no other resource than Longdill, from whom I conceive that a copy might be obtained on the ground of your having on a former occasion lent me a copy and my not having returned it, and his having collected all the copies belonging to me and the person to whom this copy belongs having a right to it. You remember that you borrowed what I now speak of from a law student, that you lent it to me, and that it never was returned. In the present state of the negotiation with Bryant the utmost care must be taken that no circumstance

relating to it transpires. I hope that you were impressed with the necessity of secrecy on this point. Nothing but my persuasion that you will act as if you were, engages my consent to the negotiation.

May I request if you obtain the settlement that you will cause a copy to be made and keep it for me.

The style of this letter I fear will appear to you unusual. The truth is that I feel the unbounded difficulty of making myself understood on the commonest topic, and I am obliged to adopt for that purpose a cold and stiff set of phrases. No person can feel deeper interest for another, or venerate their character and talents more sincerely, or regret more incessantly their own impotent loneliness, than I for you and yours.

Remember me kindly to Fanny, both for her own and for her sister's sake.

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTERS TO GODWIN. 61

Address still Geneva. I shall have
returned in a few days from this date.

[*Addressed outside.*]

*William Godwin, Esq.,
41, Skinner Street,
Snow Hill,
London.*

Angleterre.

LETTER XXXIII.

GENEVA.

July 17th, 1816.

[Wednesday.]

SIR,

I write by this post to Mr. Hume, giving the authority which you request. Before this letter arrives you will however have received another from me affording a solution of the questions contained in your last, and rendering that request superfluous. The delay which has occurred in writing to Mr. Hume and to you arose simply from my expecting by every post an acknowledgment of the letters to which I allude. I need not again assert that I think Mr. Turner neither a good man

nor a good judge of men. He acted in your affairs with duplicity, and accused me indirectly of the duplicity which he was conscious attached to his own conduct.

Mr. Turner was in the instance which you state, and will be in every instance, deceived in his judgement of me, for no other reason than because he suspects me to be like himself.

I recommend to you caution in ascertaining the value of the estates before you allow the deeds to be drawn, as, of course, although the business is nominally confided to Mr. Hume, you are really the agent.

I suppose it will be necessary to dispatch the deeds hither for signature ; a power of attorney, I fear, would not suffice. However that may be, let us choose first the easiest and the quickest, next, the securest plan. I shall not remain longer at Geneva than affairs require, and hope to have the earliest

64 *LETTERS TO GODWIN.*

and minutest intelligence from you on
a question so important to us both.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

W. Godwin, Esq.,

41, Skinner Street,

Snow Hill,

London.

Angleterre.

LETTER XXXIV.

5, ABBEY CHURCH YARD,
BATH.

October 3rd, 1816.

[Thursday.]

SIR,

I am exceedingly sorry to disappoint you again. I cannot send you £300 because I have not £300 to send. I enclose within a few pounds, the wreck of my late negociation with my father.

In truth, I see no hope of my attaining speedily to such a situation of affairs as should enable me to discharge my engagements towards you. My father's main design, in all the transactions which I have had with him, has gone to tie me up from all such irregular applications of my fortune. In this he

might have failed had he not been seconded by Longdill, and between them both I have been encompassed with such toils as were impossible to be evaded. When I look back I do not see what else I could have done than submit. What is called firmness would have, I sincerely believe, left me in total poverty.

In the present instance I expected to have saved 5 or £600; 300 of which, as I informed you, were devoted to you. I have saved only 248, my father having made an indispensable condition that all my debts should be paid.

I do not think that anything can be done with Bryant. Turner, had he chosen, might have managed the affair with Dawe. That nothing is more evident than that this person has some malignant passions which he seeks to gratify at my expense and at yours—I do not indeed know what can be done, except through private confidence.

Shall I conclude this unwelcome letter by assuring you of the continuance of those dispositions concerning your welfare which I have so often expressed? Shall I say that I am ready to co-operate in whatever plan may be devised for your benefit?

P. B. SHELLEY.

[*Addressed outside.*]

*William Godwin, Esq.,
41, Skinner Street,
Snow Hill,
London.*

LETTER XXXV.

[5, ABBEY CHURCH YARD,]

BATH.

November 24th, 1816.

[*Saturday.*]

SIR,

I lament exceedingly that you suppose it possible, or even esteem it right, that I should submit to such a proposal as Dawe's. I lament that you could even permit me to accede to such an imposture. You will therefore be disappointed at my refusal—you will think me insensible, unjust, insincere. I regret that I must inspire you with such feelings, but I am persuaded that it is my duty not to submit to terms of so exorbitant a nature.

The conclusion of your letter adds

to the reluctance of my refusal, but it does not render it the less firm.

I enclose a letter to Hume written principally for the purpose of being shown to Dawe. Possibly he will change his tone when he finds his tricks ineffectual. For nothing is more evident than that all he says are the excuses and subterfuges of a money broker.

You will observe from the rough calculation in my letter to H. that he asks very nearly 25 per cent., and that I should throw away not £1000, but £2,800.

The principles which pronounce on the injustice of my hereditary rights, are such, as rightly limited and understood, are far dearer to me than life.

But these principles teach me to set a high value on the power with which their violation may one day intrust me. They instruct me to be more, not less, cautious in alienating it.

Indeed it would be no inconsiderable evil if such a remorseless, mean-spirited wretch as Dawe were to be presented with £2,800!

My refusal is therefore firm.—But depend on it that what could be done in 1814 could be done, and that on even better terms, now. Do not despair. Even Dawe may retract and relent, or some one be found less exorbitant. I applied about a fortnight since to a quarter from which I had formerly obtained a supply, but have not received an answer.

The letters have arrived so late to-day, that I am obliged to write in haste if I would reply by return of post.

[P. B. SHELLEY.]

[*Addressed outside.*]

*W. Godwin, Esq.,
41, Skinner Street,
Snow Hill,
London.*

LETTER XXXVI.

[GREAT MARLOW.]

March 9th, 1817.

[*Sunday.*]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

I wish you knew me better than to be vexed or disappointed at anything I do. Either circumstances of petty difficulty and embarrassment find some peculiar attraction in me, or I have a fainter power of repulsion with regard to them. Certain it is that nothing gives me serener and more pure pleasure than your society, and that if in breaking an engagement with you I have forced an exercise of your philosophy upon you, I have in my own person incurred a penalty which mine has not yet taught me to alleviate.

We are immersed in all kind of confusion here. Mary said you meant to come hither soon enough to see the leaves come out. Which leaves did you mean, for the wild-briar buds are already unfolded? And what of *Mandeville*, and how will he bear to be transplanted here? All my people, little Willy not excepted, desire their kindest love to you. I beg to unite in kind remembrances to Mrs. Godwin, whose health is I hope improved.

Yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To

Mr. William Godwin,

London.

LETTER XXXVII.

[GREAT MARLOW.]

March 22nd, 1817.

[*Sunday.*]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

Marshall's proposal is one in which, however reluctantly, I must refuse to engage.* It is that I should grant bills to the amount of his debts, which are to expire in thirty months. This is a situation in which it might become me to place myself for the sake of some very dear friend, or some person who might have an irresistible public claim, but which, if it were only in the possible arrival of such emergencies, I feel that with respect to Marshall I am

* Godwin's old friend and companion, James Marshall, on whose behalf in 1816 Godwin had drawn up an appeal for assistance to his friends.

bound to avoid. Do not infer that I deny him to have just claims on my assistance, which, if I were in possession of my paternal estate, I should hasten to fulfil.

It was spring when I wrote to you, and winter when your answer arrived. But the frost is very transitory; every bud is ready to burst into leaf. It is a nice distinction you make between the development and the complete expansion of the leaves. The oak and the chesnut, the latest and the earliest parents of foliage, would afford you a still subtler subdivision, which would enable you to defer the visit, from which we expect so much delight, for six weeks. I hope we shall really see you before that time, and that you will allow the chesnut, or any other impartial tree, as he stands in the foreground, to be considered as a virtual representation of the rest.

Will is quite well, and very beautiful.

Mary unites with me in presenting her kind remembrances to Mrs. Godwin ; and begs most affectionate love to you.

Yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Have you read *Melincourt*? It would entertain you. Will you be kind enough to pay Newbery, the newsman, for me? I enclose the cheque.

To

Mr. William Godwin,

London.

LETTER XXXVIII.

GREAT MARLOW.

December 1st, 1817.

[*Saturday.*]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

Mandeville has arrived this evening. Mary is now reading it; and I am like a man on the brink of a precipice, or a ship whose sails are all to wind for the storm. What do you mean by saying that you shall be in a state of unusual disquiet for the next two weeks? Is it money or literary affairs? I am extremely sorry to hear that Ireson has put you off. I am to the last degree serious and earnest in the affair, and I can place no trust but in Evans. I have written to Longdill as enclosed. My health has suffered

somewhat of a relapse since I saw you, attended with pulmonary symptoms. I do not found much hope on physicians; their judgments are all dissimilar, and their prescriptions alike ineffectual. I shall, at all events, quit this damp situation as soon as an opportunity offers, and I am strongly impelled to doubt whether Italy might not decide in my frame the contest between disease and youth in favour of life. The precariousness arising out of these considerations makes me earnest that something should be done, and speedily, with Evans. I shall then be free, whatever I ought to do. Until then I consider myself bound to you. Adieu.

Most affectionately yours,

P. B. S[HELLEY.]

To

*Mr. William Godwin,
London.*

My best respects to Mrs. Godwin.
Does she think of paying us a visit?

Clare bids me say that the enclosed
thing is a measure, and that she sends
her love to her mother.

LETTER XXXIX.

MARLOW.

December 7th, 1817.

[Friday.]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

To begin with the subject of most immediate interest : close with Richardson ; and when I say this, what relief should I not feel from a thousand distressing emotions, if I could believe that he was in earnest in his offer ! I have not heard from Longdill, though I wish earnestly for information.

My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to a state of such unnatural and keen excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of

grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopical distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa, between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and although at present it has passed away without any very considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumption. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm

climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, it would be my *duty* to go to Italy without delay ; and it is only when that measure becomes an indispensable duty that, contrary to both Mary's feelings and to mine, as they regard you, I shall go to Italy. I need not remind you (besides the mere pain endured by the survivors) of the train of evil consequences which my death would cause to ensue. I am thus circumstantial and explicit, because you seem to have misunderstood me. It is not health, but life, that I should seek in Italy ; and that, not for my own sake—I feel that I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.

I ought to say I cannot persevere in the meat diet. What you say of

Malthus fills me, as far as my intellect is concerned, with life and strength. I believe that I have a most anxious desire that the time should quickly come that, even so far as you are personally concerned, you should be tranquil and independent. But when I consider the intellectual lustre with which you clothe this world, and how much the last generation of mankind may be benefited by that light flowing forth without the intervention of one shadow, I am elevated above all thoughts which tend to you or myself as an individual, and become, by sympathy, part of those distant and innumerable minds to whom your writings must be present.

I meant to have written to you about *Mandeville*, solely ; but I was so irritable and weak that I could not write, although I thought I had much to say. I have read *Mandeville*, but I must read it again soon, for the interest is of that

irresistible and overwhelming kind, that the mind in its influence is like a cloud borne on by an impetuous wind—like one breathlessly carried forward, who has no time to pause, or observe the causes of his career. I think the power of *Mandeville* is inferior to nothing you have done ; and, were it not for the character of Falkland, no instance in which you have exerted that power of *creation* which you possess beyond all contemporary writers, might compare with it. Falkland is still alone ; power is, in Falkland, not, as in *Mandeville*, tumult hurried onward by the tempest, but tranquillity standing unshaken amid its fiercest rage. But *Caleb Williams* never shakes the deepest soul like *Mandeville*. It must be said of the latter, you rule with a rod of iron. The picture is never bright ; and we wonder whence you drew the darkness with which its shades are deepened, until the epithet of tenfold might

almost cease to be a metaphor. The noun *smorfia*,* touches some cord within us with such a cold and jarring power that I started, and for some time could scarce believe but that I was Mandeville, and that this hideous grin was stamped upon my own face. In style and strength of expression, *Mandeville* is wonderfully great, and the energy and the sweetness of the sentiments scarcely to be equalled. Clifford's character, as mere beauty, is a divine and soothing contrast; and I do not think—if, perhaps, I except (and I know not if I ought to do so) the speech of Agathon in the *Symposium* of Plato—that there ever was produced a moral discourse more characteristic of all that is admirable and lovely in human nature—more lovely and admirable in itself—than that of Henrietta to Mandeville, as he is recovering from madness. Shall I say that, when I

* An Italian word, signifying "grimace."

discovered that she was pleading all this time sweetly for her lover, and when at last she weakly abandoned poor Mandeville, I felt an involuntary and, perhaps, an unreasonable pang? Adieu!

Always most affectionately yours,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To
Mr. William Godwin,
London.

LETTER XL.

GREAT MARLOW.

December 11th, 1817.

[*Tuesday.*]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

If I had believed it possible you should send any part of my letter to the *Chronicle* I should have expressed more fully my sentiments of *Mandeville* and of the author ; as it is, I cannot but be glad that you should think any opinion of mine relating to your book worthy of being presented to the public. The effect of your favourable consideration of my powers, as they relate to the judgment of the degree and kind of approbation due to the intellectual executions of others, has emboldened

me to write, not a volume, but a more copious statement of my feelings as they were excited by *Mandeville*. This I have sent to the *Examiner*. If Hunt does not insert it, I will send it to you for your own reading, though it was so written as to be more interesting to the public than to yourself.

I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express ; but I think you are mistaken in some points in regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of *Laon and Cythna*, but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem, and this reassured me in some degree at least. The poem was

produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I resolved in this book to leave some records of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling—as real though not so prophetic—as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless, but when I considered contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I will own that I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists—in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sympathy and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to

apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my Chancery paper (a cold, forced, unimpassioned insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument) and to the little scrap about *Mandeville*, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers more favourable than that which grew, as it were, from the "agony and bloody sweat" of intellectual travail, surely I must feel that in some manner either I am mistaken in believing that I have

any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquility which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions on the subject of the economy of intellectual force valuable to me ; and if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits.

This dry and frosty weather fills me with health and spirits ; I wish I could believe that it would last. Shall we now see you soon ? Why could you not for a day or two at least leave town ? Mrs. Godwin, too ; how is she ? and

does she not mean to take embargo off
her own person?

Mary unites with me in best love.

My dear Godwin,

Most affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

To

Mr. William Godwin,

London.

LETTER XLI.

BAGNI DI LUCCA.

July 25th, 1818.

[Saturday.]

MY DEAR GODWIN,

We have, as yet, seen nothing of Italy which marks it to us as the habitation of departed greatness. The serene sky, the magnificent scenery, the delightful productions of the climate, are known to us, indeed, as the same with those which the ancients enjoyed. But Rome and Naples—even Florence,—are yet to see; and, if we were to write you at present a history of our impressions, it would give you no idea that we lived in Italy.

I am exceedingly delighted with the

plan you propose of a book, illustrating the character of our calumniated Republicans. It is precisely the subject for Mary; and I imagine that, but for the fear of being excited to refer to books not within her reach, she would attempt to begin it here, and order the works you notice. I am unfortunately little skilled in English history, and the interest which it excites in me is so feeble, that I find it a duty to attain merely to that general knowledge of it which is indispensable.

Mary has just finished Ariosto with me, and, indeed, has attained a very competent knowledge of Italian. She is now reading Livy. I have been constantly occupied in literature, but have written little—except some translations from Plato; in which I exercised myself, in the despair of producing anything original. The *Symposium* of Plato seems to me one of the most valuable pieces of all

antiquity; whether we consider the intrinsic merit of the composition, or the light which it throws on the inmost state of manners and opinions among the ancient Greeks. I have occupied myself in translating this, and it has excited me to attempt an Essay upon the cause of some differences in sentiment between the Ancients and Moderns, with respect to the subject of the dialogue.

Two things give us pleasure in your last letters. The resumption of Malthus,* and the favourable turn of the general election. If Ministers do not find some means, totally inconceivable to me, of plunging the nation in war, do you imagine that they can subsist? Peace is all that a country, in the present state of England, seems to require to afford it tranquillity and leisure for attempting some remedy,

* *I.e.*, of Godwin's *Answer* to Malthus on population.

not to the universal evils of all constituted society, but to the peculiar system of misrule under which those evils have been exasperated now. I wish that I had health or spirits that would enable me to enter into public affairs, or that I could find words to express all that I feel and know.

The modern Italians seem a miserable people, without sensibility, or imagination, or understanding. Their outside is polished, and an intercourse with them seems to proceed with much facility, though it ends in nothing, and produces nothing. The women are particularly empty, and, though possessed of the same kind of superficial grace, are devoid of every cultivation and refinement. They have a ball at the Casino here every Sunday, which we attend—but neither Mary nor Claire dance. I do not know whether they refrain from philosophy or protestantism.

I hear that poor Mary's book [*Frankenstein*] is attacked most violently in the *Quarterly Review*. We have heard some praise of it; and, among others, an article of Walter Scott's in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

If you should have anything to send us—and, I assure you, anything relating to England is interesting to us—commit it to the care of Ollier the bookseller, or P[eacock]; they send me a parcel every quarter.

My health is, I think, better, and, I imagine, continues to improve; but I still have busy thoughts and dispiriting cares, which I would shake off—and it is now summer.—A thousand good wishes to yourself and your undertakings.

Ever most affectionately yours,

P. B. S[HELLEY].

To

Mr. William Godwin,
London.

LETTER XLII.

PISA.

August 7th, 1820.

[Monday.]

SIR,

The purport of this letter is to inform you that I cannot comply with the request contained in yours dated July 21st, and that you ought not to depend upon me for any further pecuniary assistance at the present moment. —My affairs are in a state of the most complicated embarrassment: added to which I am surrounded by circumstances in which any diminution of my very limited resources might involve me in personal peril. I fear that you and I are not on such terms as to justify me in exposing to you the actual state of my delicate and emergent situation which the most sacred con-

siderations imperiously require me to conceal from Mary; be it sufficient, without entering into the subject now present to my mind, to state the question in such a manner that any entire stranger who should chance to peruse this letter might without reference to these circumstances perceive that I am justified in withholding my assent to your request. I *cannot* comply, but it will be an additional consolation to me to have shown that I ought not.

I have given you within a few years the amount of a considerable fortune, and have destituted myself, for the purpose of realising it, of nearly four times the amount. Except for the *good will* which this transaction seems to have produced between you and me, this money, for any advantage it ever conferred on you, might as well have been thrown into the sea. Had I kept in my own hands this £4,000 or £5,000 and administered it in trust for your

permanent advantage, I should have been indeed your benefactor. The error however was greater in the man of mature age, extensive experience, and penetrating intellect, than in the crude and impetuous boy. Such an error is seldom committed twice.

You tell me that I promised to give you £500 out of my income of the present year. Never, certainly. How is it possible that you should assert such a mistake? I might have said that I could, or that I would if I thought it necessary. I might have been so foolish as to say this; but I must have been mad to have promised what you alledge. Thus much at once on the subject of promises. I never but in one instance promised anything unconditionally. And the conditions were, first that I should *be able* to perform my engagement; and secondly, that the great sacrifices at which alone it could ever be performed by me

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should be made available to some adequate and decisive advantage to result to you ; such for instance as the compromise of the suit now pending. Had Mr. Gisborn advanced the money, according to the terms proposed by me, its application to this purpose alone would have been secured.

In October, 1819, you wrote to say that the verdict of a jury had been obtained against you for something between £600 and £2000 : and that if you had £500 you believed that you could compromise the claim founded upon that verdict. My first impulse was—that I would do every thing that I could to serve you ; as much as that I certainly expressed under a belief of the emergency of your situation. But in fact I could do nothing. A year passes over, and after this decision in a court of common law, the affair remains stationary. Nothing is more unlikely than that, if your opponents can show

a legal claim to this ever-increasing sum, they will compromise that claim for a fourth of the whole amount which has accrued. Nothing is more absurd than to pay the sum in question, if they cannot show this legal claim, with a reserve of a liability for the entire sum to those claimants in whose favour the property may be finally adjudged. The affair seems to me a mass of improbabilities and absurdities. You still urge the request of £500. You would take anything in the shape of it that would compel me to make the great sacrifices (if indeed *now* it be not impossible) of paying it from my income, without—you must allow me to say—a due regard to the proportion borne by your accommodation to my immediate loss or even your own ultimate advantage. If you had bills on my income for the sum, how would you procure money on them? My credit, except among those friends from whom I

never will ask a pecuniary favor, certainly would not suffice to raise it, and your own name is worth as little or less in the money market. That my bills would tell for something, I do not doubt. And when you had procured this money—this £400—what would be done with it? What is become of the £100 already advanced by Horace Smith? Put your hand upon your heart, and tell me where it is. In a letter written *after* your receipt of this sum you state with the most circumlocutory force of expression, and as if you were anxious to leave yourself no outlet for escape, that you have never received a single farthing. This of course was only meant for immediate effect; and not for the purpose of ultimately leading into error, and is only a part of that system you pursue of sacrificing all interests to the present one. Suppose after this I were to involve myself in the chance of destruc-

tion, to defraud my creditors of what is justly theirs, to withhold their due from those to whom I am the only source of happiness and misery, and send you these bills. The weakness and wickedness of my conduct would admit of some palliation if the money they produced were reserved for the attempt at compromise and re-transmitted to me the moment that attempt, as it must, should fail. Sir Philip Sidney when dying, and consumed with thirst, gave the helmet of water which was brought to him to the wounded soldier who stood beside him. It would not have been generosity but folly had he poured it on the ground, as you would that I should the wrecks of my once prosperous fortune.

So much for the benefit which you would derive from my concession of your request. The evils—exclusive of that circumstance which makes concession absolutely impossible—were to

me immense. I have creditors whose claims amount nearly to £2,000 : some of whom are exceedingly importunate ; others suffering perhaps more than you suffer, from the delays which my impoverished condition and limited income have compelled me to assign ; others threatening to institute a legal process against me, which, not to speak of the ruinous expense connected with it, would expose my name to an obloquy from which you must excuse me if I endeavour to preserve it. Amongst these creditors is the annuitant from whom I procured money to meet Hogan's claim on you, at 25 per cent., and the interest on which you pledged yourself, but have neglected, to pay. To all, or any one of these objects the excess of my income over my expenditure is most justly due.

In case any such reverse as bankruptcy happening to yourself, a circumstance which sometimes surprises the

most prosperous concern, and infinitely probable in an embarrassed business conducted by a person wholly ignorant of trade, how would you regret my folly in not having been now severely just?

If you are sincere with me on this subject, why, instead of seeking to plunge one person already half ruined for your sake into deeper ruin, do you not procure the £400 by your own active powers? A person of your extraordinary accomplishments might easily obtain from the booksellers, for the promise of a novel, a sum exceeding this amount. Your answer to Malthus would sell at least for £400. Half the care and thought bestowed upon this honorable exertion of the highest faculties of our nature would have rewarded you more largely than dependence on a person whose precarious situation and ruined fortunes make that dependance a curse to both.

Mary is now giving suck to her

infant, in whose life, after the frightful events of the last two years, her own seems wholly to be bound up. Your letters from their style and spirit (such is your erroneous notion of taste) never fail to produce an appalling effect on her frame. On one occasion agitation of mind produced through her a disorder in the child, similar to that which destroyed our little girl two years ago. The disorder was prolonged by the alarm which it occasioned, until by the utmost efforts of medical skill and care it was restored to health. On that occasion Mary at my request authorised me to intercept such letters or information as I might judge likely to disturb her mind. That discretion I have exercised with the letter to which this is a reply. The correspondence therefore rests between you and me, if you should consider any further discussion of a similar nature with that in which you have lately been engaged

with Mary necessary, after the full explanation which I have given of my views, and the unalterable decision which I have pronounced. Nor must the correspondence with your daughter on a similar subject be renewed. It was even wholly improper, and might lead to serious imputations against both herself and you, which it is important for her honour as well as for yours that I should not only repel but prevent. She has not, nor ought she to have, the disposal of money ; if she had, poor thing, she would give it all to you.

Such a father (I mean a man of such high genius) can be at no loss to find subjects on which to address such a daughter. Do not let me be thought to dictate, but I can only convey to her such letters as are consistent with her peace to read, such as you once proposed to write, containing

The remainder of this letter is missing.]

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